



Town of Warren, Rhode Island

Minutes of the Economic Development Board

The Town of Warren, RI Economic Development Board met at a Regular Meeting on March 21, 2016 at 6:00 p.m. at Warren Town Hall. The presiding officer was Karen Dionne. Board members present were Sara Volino, Walter Conklin, Tyler Dixon, Mark Lombardi, Ben Terry, Keith Phillis and Jessica Pflaumer. Kathleen Tucciarone was absent. Stephen Smith was in attendance. Town Council member Brandt Heckert was in attendance. Kristin MacDonald was present at the meeting to serve as Secretary to the EDB.

1. Review and Approval of Minutes from the Regular Meeting of February 16, 2016.

The minutes from the regular meeting held on February 16, 2016 were reviewed by the board via email. A motion was made by Ms. Dionne to approve the minutes, the motion was seconded by Mr. Phillis, and all members were in favor.

2. Update of status of website workgroup.

Ms. Dionne and Mr. Conklin recently had a meeting to research the new municipal website; they listened to a presentation by a representative from Civic Plus, which is a company that specializes in municipal website design. In the future, they hope to hear presentations from other municipal website companies as well. There was concern that Civic Plus does not integrate with e-permitting, which Mr. Heckert noted was an important component of a new website. Mr. Conklin discussed the option of working with a company that does not specialize in municipal websites but could possibly be capable of offering more customized service to meet the town's needs, such as an e-permitting component. Ms. Dionne stated that a company like Civic Plus would offer more support to town employees who will need to be trained to work with the website. In the future, the work group will continue to meet to research the town's needs and study about other town's websites, as well as research other municipal website companies.

3. Update and discussion on business property survey workgroup.

Mr. Dixon updated the board on the progress of the business property survey workgroup, which includes Mr. Dixon, Mr. Phillis, Ms. Tucciarone and Ms. Pflaumer. The survey is designed to assist the zoning department in identify zoning issues. Mr. Phillis passed out a draft of the resolution to the Town Council for the initiative and also a draft of the checklist for the survey. Mr. Dixon noted that the individual filling out the survey would be making general observations and would not have to be a zoning expert. Ms. Dionne asked about

using the survey to cite obvious zoning infractions and/or “design review” issues; Mr. Dixon cautioned that the focus of the survey should be economic development. The survey takers are not meant to “enforcers”, rather they are concerned citizens gathering information to help the town make decisions. The first step is to complete the survey; afterwards, the town will have to determine with the data regarding the town’s image. Ms. Dionne noted the survey could be a starting point towards sign enforcement. Mr. Dixon said that the survey results will be put into an Excel spreadsheet and analyzed; the data will be useful in shaping ordinances in the future.

The board discussed ways for the survey takers to identify themselves. Ms. Pflaumer suggested ID badges with contact information for the town manager. After the resolution is approved by Town Council, the board discussed having the survey publicized in the Warren Times. The board discussed creating a flyer about the survey which would also be good publicity for the EDB. The survey results could also be the focus of a future business forum. Ms. Volino suggested that the board make an official recommendation to Town Hall to provide an updated business inventory.

A motion was made by Mr. Phillis for the board to authorize the zoning survey group to present a final resolution in support of the initiative to present to Town Council, the motion was seconded by Ms. Volino, and all members were in favor. The work group plans to present the resolution to Town Council in April.

Ms. Dionne asked the board to submit email suggestions regarding the survey checklist as well as suggestions for the title of the initiative. Mr. Phillis and Mr. Dixon said they welcomed feedback from the board. Revised documents will be emailed to the board by Mr. Phillis before the April meeting.

Mr. Heckert and Mr. Smith left the meeting at this time (7:25 pm).

4. Discussion regarding initiatives for vacant and neglected storefronts in Main Street business area.

Ms. Dionne, Ms. Volino and Mr. Terry plan to meet with Town Planner Kate Michaud in the next few weeks to discuss grant opportunities for creative ideas to improve the Main Street business area. Mr. Terry said he was interested exploring funding for wayfinding signage.

A motion was made to adjourn by Ms. Dionne, the motion was seconded by Ms. Pflaumer, and all members were in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 7:56 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristin M. MacDonald
April 17, 2016.

